

THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

THE LATHAM FOUNDATION STORY SERVICE
FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The bravest are the tenderest;
The loving are the daring.
—Bayard Taylor.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN—THE BOY WHO WAS NOT AFRAID TO BE KIND

By E. M. S. FITE

AH, GEE! You're just a Sissy, and a 'fraid cat! Can't you let a fellow have some fun without cryin' about it?"

This was said to Tom Mann by Jack Martin who was an older boy than Tom, and a head taller. A boy who thought it was "fun" to worry cats, to tie tin cans to dogs tails and to do anything to an animal that would cause it to jump or run from fright. And just now because he had been torturing a poor, forsaken alley cat it was more than Tom Mann could bear, and with tears running down his cheeks he begged Jack to let the cat go.

When accused of being a "Sissy and a 'fraid cat" Tom's temper got the best of him, and he jumped in with head and fists active to show Jack that he could "hold his own" even with a bully, and they had a rough and tumble fight during which the cat made his escape.

Tom's father had often told him that unless a boy could control his temper he could never hope to control others, so that when Tom had a breathing spell he remembered this and he was ashamed of himself for having started the fight; but he was glad that the cat got away. At the end of the tussle in which Tom had "held his own," and both boys came off with sore spots, Tom held out his hand to Jack, and said to him.

"I just can't bear to see an animal hurt, Jack, and I guess the reason you do it is because you don't know much about animals and because you haven't got a father to tell you things like I have."

Jack was very much surprised to hear Tom say this and for a moment it made him feel ashamed then he put his hands in his pockets and swaggered about as he said again "Ah, Gee! Men ain't so soft hearted."

"Well maybe some men are not 'soft hearted' as you call it, about animals, but I know that the greatest men we know anything about were 'soft hearted' about animals and human beings too; they would never hurt any one or anything on purpose," replied Tom.

"I don't believe it," said Jack, "Who do you know about that was that kind of a softy?"

Tom thought for a moment and then said with great enthusiasm, "Jack, I tell you what you do, you come on home with me. Father promised to tell Virginia and me about Abraham Lincoln this evening. We have to know things about him to tell at school this month, because of Lincoln's birthday on the 12th, and you surely believe that Lincoln was some great man, don't you?"

"Well," said Jack, "I've heard he wasn't any Sissy nor 'fraid of any body, but I can't say I know much about him."

So after much coaxing Jack was one of the three listeners to Mr. Mann's story of Abraham Lincoln that evening.

"You see," started Mr. Mann, "I think somehow that living close to nature, by that I mean close to growing and living things out-of-doors, away from cities, is a good thing for a boy. It gives him a chance to make friends with birds and animals in their own surroundings, their own homes as it were. And then a boy learns to know their habits and comes to realize that they love, and feel, and suffer, just as we do only without the ability to think or reason quite as clearly as humans do. And when a boy learns those things it seems natural for him to want to help and not to hurt."

"Yes, Daddy dear, but tonight you promised to tell us about Abraham Lincoln," said little Virginia.

"So I did, Virginia, I remember that, and that is just why I started the way I did, because Abraham Lincoln whom every one loved and looked up to as a great and good man, and whose memory we love for his GENTLENESS, KINDNESS, JUSTICE and FEARLESSNESS, was just such a boy. He was born and raised in the country where his daily companions, and his friends, were the birds and animals. He was never known to wantonly hurt or kill any creature. But he is known to have shown kindness to many an animal and to have helped many an animal out of a tight place. This habit of kindness which he had formed as a boy remained with him all his life.

"Abraham Lincoln's father had gone west when the Indians were still in possession of the land, so he had to clear the land, and make a home, without the help such as one gets in a town. From the time that he was a small boy Abe, as he was called, had to work on the farm and help his father. He never has more than one year's schooling in his life. Just think of that; you children who have such splendid schools, and teachers to help you to know and understand your studies. But Abe was eager to learn. He always 'wanted to know and to be something.' He was determined to learn, and to understand things that he saw and heard. He used to lie by the open fire at night and write on the wooden fire shovel with a piece of burnt stick, for he had no slate and pencil. Later he made some ink from brier-root, and a pen from a Turkey-Buzzard's feather; that was when he was older and had some paper on which to write. He borrowed and read every book that he could get hold of and they were not many, but he never let them go until he understood all there was in them.

"The short time that Abe did go to school he and his little sister had to walk miles through the cold and snow, and in order to keep warm they carried hot potatoes in their hands which had been baked in the ashes of the open fire." At this point Mr. Mann stopped and asked, "Are you getting tired, shall I stop?"

"No, no, go on." The three exclaimed in one breath.

"Well," continued Mr. Mann, "Abraham Lincoln's mother died when the boy was very young. He was very devoted to his mother and he used to go out and sit by her grave in the forest and cry, for he was lonely and missed her more than any one knew; she had always been very gentle and loving, and had helped him to learn many things. After he was a man, he said to a friend, "God bless my Mother; all that I am or ever hope to be I owe to her."

"When Abe was ten years of age his father, Thomas Lincoln, married again, and his step-mother was just as kind and loving to the boy as his own mother had been. She said in after years that Abe had never given her a cross word or look, and that he was the best boy she ever saw. Now you are not to think that because Abraham Lincoln was such a good boy, equally kind and gentle to humans and animals, that he was what is called a namby-pamby softy, and had no courage. Not at all. He was just as strong and courageous as he was kind and gentle. If he felt that he was right he would stand for it in the face of great odds.

"One day when Lincoln was riding horseback from one town to another with some lawyer friends, they passed a grove of trees where the birds were singing and they noticed that a young bird had dropped from the nest and lay fluttering on the ground. After passing the spot Lincoln is said to have excused himself to his friends saying, 'Wait for me a moment.' He turned and rode back to where the young bird lay and lifted it and set it on a limb near the nest from which it had fallen. One of his friends said: 'Why did you bother yourself and stop us with such a trifle as that?' 'My friend,' said Lincoln, 'I can only say this, that I feel better for it. I could not have slept tonight if I had left that helpless little creature to perish on the ground.'

"It will be well for you children to remember Mr. Lincoln's answer," said Mr. Mann, "and

to know it was said of him that his heart was always big enough to show kindness to men and animals who were in trouble. One morning Mr. Lincoln started to drive to the Court House some miles away from where he lived and he wore a new suit of clothes which he had just bought; as he had very little money a suit of clothes had to last Abraham Lincoln a long time, so he tried to be careful of them. On the way to the Court House he passed a pig that was trying very hard to get out of a deep mud hole. Each time the pig managed to climb part way up the slippery bank back he would slide again and the water and mud covered his head. Lincoln looked at the pig, and looked at his new clothes. He knew that he could not afford to ruin his clothes, so with a shake of his head he drove on. When he had gone about two miles he turned back, saying to himself, 'I've no right to leave that poor creature to die in the mud, and what is more I won't leave him.' When he reached the mud hole he carried some fence rails from a nearby fence, and placed them so that he could get to the edge of the hole without falling in. Then he knelt down and reached over and caught the pig by the fore legs and pulled him up to solid ground. The pig grunted his thanks and ran off, while Lincoln with his new clothes covered with mud drove on to the Court House; but his heart was light, he knew that he had done the right thing in that humane act.

"Abe always liked a square deal and would never stand for foul play. You boys know what that means. When he was grown, he was six feet, four inches high and had great strength. Once he had a wrestling bout with a man who tried to take unfair advantages of him, and Abe held the man at arm's length and shook him like a child; but when all was over and the man had taken his punishment, Abe shook hands with him. He did not bear ill will in his heart.

"When Abraham Lincoln became a man he practiced law, and he was known by every one as being a just and kind man. He would never take a law case just because it would bring him money; he turned away many people and gave them advice free because he thought they were in the wrong. In more than one case he offered his services free to persons who were in trouble and had no money with which to pay a lawyer. He always wanted to help young men who were in trouble, for he felt that it was largely because they did not know better, and not because they wanted to do wrong.

"There is one well known case where Lincoln helped to save the life of a young man who was accused of murder. The mother was too poor to hire a lawyer to defend her son; after Lincoln had inquired closely into the case, he felt sure that the boy was innocent, so he wrote to the mother and offered to defend her son for nothing, and he won the case. Lincoln was ever truthful and honest, and he was just as keen as he was honest, he was not easy to fool.

"Lincoln was noted for a keen sense of humor; he could always tell a joke or a good story at any time, so that people liked him for this as well as for his kind heart. He never changed after he was made President of the United States; he was the same gentle, loving, and fun loving man that he had always been, and just as considerate towards animals. 'Our Dumb Animals' tells that he visited General Grant's headquarters during the Civil War, and he noticed three tiny kittens crawling about the floor; they were crying piteously because their mother had died and they were very young. President Lincoln picked them up and as he sat with them on his knees, he stroked their fur and talked to them. 'Poor little creatures! Don't cry! you'll be taken good care of.' Then he turned to an officer, and said, 'Colonel, I hope you will see that these poor little motherless waifs are given plenty of good milk and treated kindly.' Three times the President went to that tent during his short visit, and picked up those little kittens, and petted them.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Mann, "that we can all learn a great deal from that little act of kindness shown by our great President; to know that even at the time when he was so worried by that terrible war he took the time for thought and kindness to those little motherless kittens. He did not think he was less manly for doing that, but he would have thought he was not wholly a man if he had neglected them in their need."

"Even as a boy, it is said of Lincoln that he was always courteous; he lifted his hat when he bowed, and he would never permit any bad language where he was. As I see it," said Mr. Mann, "it is the strong boy or man who dares to be always kind and gentle in his treatment of human beings and of animals. It is the boy or man who through ignorance or weakness fears ridicule, and hasn't the courage to stand up for the weak and who will bully and tease animals and humans who can't protect themselves. Always remember that ridicule of a kindly act will never come from any one whose opinion is really worth anything."

"Abraham Lincoln's life is a splendid example of what a boy may hope to do through always trying to do the right thing, and the kindly thing, and by being fearless in the effort."

When Mr. Mann finished his talk, he told Jack that he would be welcome at any time that we wanted to hear the talks that he gave Tom and Virginia at their Story Hour, and that he hoped that Jack would come again. And Jack did come again many times. It was not long before Tom reported to his Father that Jack had stopped teasing boys and animals and that he was overheard defending Abraham Lincoln for his kind deeds to animals; for Jack accepted Lincoln as a manly man, whose example a fellow could afford to follow.

SCHOOL NOTES
THE MCKINLEY KIND DEEDS CLUB



MISS ALYS C. GARCIA, fourth grade teacher in the McKinley School, San Leandro, is one of the banner bearers in Humane Education and is demonstrating what can be achieved with perservance and a systematic carrying out of constructive programs.

Children who thoughtlessly took pleasure in sling shots and guns are now studying the habits of birds, their enormous service to agriculture, the exquisite beauty of their plumage as illustrated in our colored slides and the glory of their songs, faithfully reproduced on the phonograph. Turning from the cruelty of slaughter, they are live wires of interest in helping our feathered friends and have joined the KIND DEEDS CLUB 100% strong.

Thus a respect for bird and animal life is being stimulated, a recognition of our common kinship with all that lives and breathes developed, and the obvious result of wishing to help instead of destroy is becoming a wholesome, guiding principle in the receptive child's life.

The child's love of creating has had its exercise in the making of bird houses and Miss Garcia's artistic grouping of them amid improvised masses of fresh green boughs brought the Tribune reporter and later the photographer, who illustrated our KIND DEEDS CLUB activities with the accompanying photos of our good members in the issue of November 30th last.

A Kind Deeds box has been installed in Miss Garcia's room into which the children drop the written accounts of the deeds they have been doing. The first voiding of the box makes a delightful record of their helpfulness to parents, friends, animals and often total strangers.

Thus Tony Fretus, thinking of a tired, sick mother, learned to cook the meals.

Kathryn Gordon, goes on helpful domestic errands. She helped a man find money he had lost and did rescue work in behalf of lost animals.

Marie Captista reports the rescue of a stray animal.

Alice Armstrong every day sweeps the sidewalk for an old man.

Manuel Gonsales has the splendid deed to his credit of persuading a boy to stop shooting, besides many deeds of domestic helpfulness. Similar reports towards making the home happy are given by Alice Lechandro, Mary Guerra, Frances Norwell, David Parker, Laura Seha, Rose Shinda, Charlotte Perry and Richard Parker.

John Souza makes a habit of chopping wood for a helpless old lady.

Joseph Nunes was successful in stopping two boys from killing birds, and set a worthwhile example in giving shelter to an abandoned dog.

John May knocked the gun out of a boy's hand when he was about to kill a bird.

What a wonderful little helper in the home is Harriett Jones who through her entire vacation set the table every day, made the beds, swept the floors, washed the dishes, ran on errands to the store, fed the animals. She adds: "I do all the things my mother wants me to do."

Clifford Coelho reports animal rescue work. He says that he made a boy stop shooting birds.

We feel a tremendous delight and interest in this club, and we extend our heartiest congratulations to Miss Garcia, to whose spirit of Humaneness and cooperativeness, and a sincere desire to make out of her little foreign children good American citizens, her success is due.



The Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education, Inc.
Latham Square Building, Oakland, California.